

New Jersey's top high school science students broaden horizons at Drew University

'Best and brightest' guided by Drew faculty in college-level science research



Award-Winning Facilities

Some of New Jersey's top high school science students attending the Governor's School of the Sciences at Drew University in Madison this summer are enjoying top-flight facilities, such as the award-winning Ehinger Center, above, which is home to a student café, two lounge areas and other common spaces with a wall of windows looking out onto the campus.

Posted: Friday, July 25, 2014 1:58 pm, Madison Eagle

MADISON – Since Sunday, July 13, Drew University has been hosting 85 of the top science students in the state of New Jersey for the prestigious three-week Governor's School of the Sciences, which will continue on the campus at 36 Madison Ave. in Madison through Saturday, Aug. 2.

The high school students are being exposed to college-level science learning, research and facilities, under the guidance of Drew University's faculty.

In 31st Year

This is the 31st year that Drew University has hosted the Governor's School, a state-sponsored, summer residential enrichment program for high-achieving high school students that started in 1984. The goal of the Governor's School in the Sciences is to introduce students to scientists and advanced science and mathematics topics they are unlikely to study in high school, in order to broaden their appreciation and knowledge, and to help prepare them to study science in college.

During their stay at Drew, the students are taking courses on topics ranging from chemical bonding to the cell biology of cancer; working on lab experiments involving computer science, biochemistry and physics; and taking part in projects that involve psychology, chemistry, physics and ecology, among other disciplines.

In addition to their coursework, the students are attending seminars from outside speakers, and will spend a morning talking with Governor's School alumni and parent volunteers to discuss career options.

Nobel Prize Winner

"The Governor's School in the Sciences at Drew University is an academically rigorous program that challenges some of the best high school students in New Jersey to reach new levels of understanding about the sciences," said N.J. Secretary of Higher Education Rochelle Hendricks. "Taught by Drew University faculty, this talented group of students may have a Nobel Prize winner among them.

“That’s what happened when Governor’s School alumnus Adam Riess returned in 2012 to share his Nobel Prize with the students,” Hendricks observed.

“Most Governor’s School students are accepted into excellent schools, including some of the best universities in the world right here in New Jersey,” he added.

‘Very Impressive’

At the end of the three-week program, students will present their research projects in a forum from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Friday, Aug. 1, in the Hall of Sciences, Room 4, on the Drew University campus.

“The team research projects are at the core of the program,” said Adam Cassano, associate professor of chemistry at Drew University and co-director of the program, “because they represent what the scholars not only learn about important scientific concepts, but also how they experience the process of science.

“In the research presentations,” Cassano explained, “you see how much the students have learned, and what they have accomplished in such a limited amount of time.

“It is always very impressive.”

Sreeja Kodai, a high school senior who attends the Medical Sciences Learning Center in Freehold, was a student in the Governor’s School at Drew University last summer.

‘Utterly Fascinating’

“Our courses, labs and projects not only were utterly fascinating, cutting-edge, and relevant, but also completed our understanding of the subject we all loved by exposing us to new fields,” Kodai said, adding that her experience has encouraged her science studies.

“A group of the most talented future scientists created an environment buzzing with intellectual thirst like my own – a place with peers who were so like-minded in their drive and genuine desire to explore new topics in science,” Kodai described the Governor’s School at Drew.

The students in the summer program are nominated by their schools and selected competitively from a comprehensive application process.

Once at the Governor’s School, they get to live in Drew University dormitories – and also get a taste of what it’s like to learn at a private, liberal arts institution of higher education that emphasizes “hands-on,” experiential higher learning, Cassano noted.

About Drew University

Drew University is a private, liberal arts university just 29 miles west of New York City. Ranked among the top liberal arts institutions nationwide by U.S. News & World Report, Forbes and Washington Monthly, Drew is also listed in Princeton Review’s “Best 378 Colleges.” The Drew promise – “We Deliver Full-Impact Learning to the World” - emphasizes the university’s commitment to borderless education that encourages each student’s success in a globally connected world.

Drew University has a total enrollment of more than 2,000 students in three schools: the College of Liberal Arts, the Caspersen School of Graduate Studies, and the Drew Theological School. The undergraduate program offers degrees in 30 different disciplines, while the Caspersen School and the Theological School offer degrees at the master’s and doctoral levels.